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## Senior Thesis

Jess Harper

*Loyola Marymount University*

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# Senior thesis

Jess Harper  
LMU  
2002

That which cannot be spoken  
can be sung,

That which cannot be sung,  
can be danced.

-Old French saying

Jessica Harper

Senior Thesis

March, 2002

## What Is Dance?

Dance is communication. It is a way to express intention as a human being. People dance with intention, even if our intention is to not have one. People may dance to tell stories or to express a specific feeling or emotion, but no matter the specific motivation, human beings dance with a purpose, which in turn animates the dance. Because human beings possess complex minds and because the body-mind-spirit connection has such power, the potential for communication using dance, as the tool is natural, which makes it even more rewarding and that is why people desire and have delight in exploring it.

Naturally humans desire to understand other's intentions. Dance creates a free play between our imaginations and understanding and that harmony forces a delight in wanting to know the purpose or intention behind the dance. There is a freedom in dance because we have ability to formulate our own intentions, as well as interpret others in many ways and continue to have freedom in our imaginations, which then stimulates as well as motivates our mind-body-spirit connection to desire to communicate on a higher level. That is why art is necessary.

Living in a world without art would be incredibly boring. If people did not have art, there would be less motivation to imagine, as well as develop more of a universal understanding that created a desire to want, to know and have purpose without language.

Dance creates a freedom that people desire naturally. Human beings have delight to move because it reminds us how alive we are. People are supernatural beings that have superiority over nature within us and outside us; therefore we enjoy feeling our bodies move because it reminds us how powerful we are. Human beings have capacity to create this freedom inside us; that is why dance is the inevitable release of emotion and power through movement. Dance is a higher level of communication that humans use as a means to express something that is unable to be spoken; a higher level of understanding between spirits and souls, a connection between our mind-body-spirit.

Even in everyday movement, we express ourselves with purpose and intention. When we walk, drive, ride a bike, we have intention behind our movement (although this natural way of living has a different kind of intention than creating a dance), and we may not have the desire to express or share that intention with others. Dancing is natural to us, but in dancing we have a deeper intention because it is art.

One needs to have an intention behind their movement, dancing specifically, and breaking it down by taking a look at gesture is necessary. In Webster's dictionary, gesture is "the use of motions of limbs or body as a means of expression." It is a sign of language and communication. We are using our bodies to express ourselves and we are exercising this with thoughts and intention. That is why it is important to consider when people are naturally moving as a way of living or when people are dancing, as a means of expression without voice:

Really, dance is observation of life. As a dancer, you have to be open to everything happening around you-how does a flower blossom, how do people talk to each other, how do they stand, how do they sit, what are they expressing in their bodies?-and all this is stylized into the language of dance. I feel that there is a very close relationship between human emotions and nature. I would like, in the short time of the performance, for the audience to feel this. (Jones, 63)

As humans we are supernatural to this nature within us and outside us and that is why dancing is so powerful. People become more aware of their mind-body-spirit connection.

In order to dance, every human needs to have a body. The body is the instrument of movement, and we use it as a tool to communicate without words (even though some pieces of work use voice). Having focus on specifically the movement of the body, one can clearly understand that movement of any kind never lies. After looking over some notes, I came across one of Martha Graham's quotes:

There is a vitality, a life force, an energy, a quickening, that is translated through you into action, and because there is only one of you in all time, this expression is unique. And if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium and will be lost. If it could be said in words, it would be; but outside of words, outside of painting, outside of sculpture, *inside* the body is an interior landscape which is revealed in movement. (Freedman, 56)

Every human desires to dance because to dance is to be human. It is a natural way of being...the dance is to be in motion, which is living, being beautiful and pure, loving, having proportion and essentially being the powerful human that we are.

Dance is fundamentally a life experience, the ultimate means of expression and communication. To understand this, we must look at dancing; not to be looked at from the outside or something learned in a painful or forceful way. We desire to dance because our mind-spirit connection in a sense knows our body, our instrument, this amazing tool we neglect. It is natural to us. As Miss Ruth St. Denis, a well renowned dance icon said:

Dancing is the natural rhythmic movements of the body that have long been suppressed or distorted, and the desire to dance would be as natural as to eat, or to run, or swim, if our civilization had not in countless ways and for divers reasons put its ban upon this instinctive and joyous action of the harmonious being.

We move in a natural way and we even dance in reactions, for we are human. For example, we have reflexes (when we witness a tragedy, when we feel sick, when we drive and need to break fast). We have a mind and we have feelings, therefore, we communicate not only through language, but our movement as well. However, people must realize that dancing with specific intention, using the elements of dance as keys to bring forth those specific intentions, creates an inevitable difference between communicating through movement on an everyday basis and communicating specifically through dance.

We move with time, space and energy, which determine what the movement means; we may not give meaning or a clear understanding toward the movement, but we have intention and feel that connection. When we look at the elements of dance (space, time and energy) we consider certain aspects that help give meaning, understanding or intention to specific movement. We associate time with everything in life and because dance is a part of living, we consider time as a main element of dance. For example, what does it mean or how does it feel to move quickly or slowly? What does it feel like when moving with percussive sharp movements, or how is it when moving as slow as possible? Along with the importance of time, people must consider how space is manipulated when dancing. Level, path and shape are the main categories of the space element. Certain shapes (near or far kinesphere), pathways (sagittal, lateral, horizontal, curvy) and levels (mid, low, high), play a part in aesthetically pleasing one's eye, due to our human interpretations. When referring to energy, philosopher Suzanne Langer believes that "while dance uses time and space, it is energy which distinguishes dance from other art forms." She claims that energy is virtual power. She goes on to say that

vital power is power, in which we use on a daily basis, whereas virtual power is energy we feel from a dancer. Energy consists of creating stabs, slashes, dabs, punches, along with augmenting and diminution within those energies. Even standing or sitting still takes a lot of energy.

When looking at the elements of dance, one must realize that in each individual element, the other two are inevitably present at all times. With this in mind, it is very important to observe and be aware of what energies we are using when fulfilling a movement, because it will help us understand what is being said, whether it is in class (practicing a Yoga posture), or simply gesturing. We want to know what the intention is behind the energy, space or time that we are trying to convey because it is relevant in the meaning, the intention and the culture.

Gerald Jonas clearly states the connection between dance and culture in an article called "Dancing, the pleasure, power and art of movement:"

The impulse to move is the raw material that cultures shape into evocative sequences of physical activity that we call dance. This phenomenon is universal. Courting and courtly dances; wedding dances and funeral dances; dances of healing and dances of instruction; dances to arouse, amuse, or uplift onlookers; dances to usher in the seasons and dances that appeal directly to the gods; dances that tell stories and dances that seek to create a formal beauty that cannot be put into words.

One may dance in prayer for hopes that it will rain so that vegetables will grow, but to another it is a way to express their sexuality. Dance is personal and is a part of culture. Through dances of different types or cultures, we are able to bring together a more universal communication, "The international fusion of dance traditions is an accelerating trend in the modern world" (Jones, p 180). Not only does a person who dances benefit individually, but also dancing can help connect people within the society as a group. As I



said before, dancing is natural and therefore we have a delight in seeing its representation. With that in mind, our language through dancing becomes and remains constant as a universally communicable language. As human beings interact, weaknesses, strengths, vulnerabilities, desires, needs, emotions, ideas, and spirits are shared and therefore we have empathy, even if we haven't experienced a specific emotion. Dancing brings out that common understanding, that universally communicable language that we are unable to state, which webs in culture and the capacity of freedom of the imagination and understanding, harmonizing like life and water. In an article by Joann Kealinohomoku it states:

Dance is a transient mode of expression, performed in a given form and style by the human body moving in space. Dance occurs through purposefully selected and controlled rhythmic movements; the resulting phenomenon is recognized as dance both by the performer and the observing members of a given group. The two crucial points which distinguish this definition from others are the limiting of dance to that of human behavior since there is no reason to believe that birds or apes perform with the intent to dance. Intent to dance and acknowledgment of the activity as dance by a given group is the second distinguishing feature of my definition. This is the crucial point for applying the definition cross-culturally as well as setting dance apart from other activities which might appear to be dance to the outside but which are considered, say, sports or ritual to the participants.

It is important to be aware of one's body, their ability to move, create intention, realize the mind-body-spirit connection, utilize elements of dance to convey specific intention and practice the universal language humans have through dance and culture, to express without any word. The ability to touch another soul, knowing that the only way to express that feeling or intention is through dance, makes our supernatural being that much more powerful.

Humans desire to dance, will continue to do so and will have desire and delight in seeing others dance as well. People wish to have that common understanding, present

when dancing or observing dance because it is a reflection of life. That reflection stimulates and motivates humans to think, imagine, experience and act. Our drive for wanting to know a purpose or intention from art will only inspire people and bring people closer together. This natural way of being reveals our life and that is why dance is so powerful and important for our mind-body-spirit.

That which cannot be spoken can be sung,

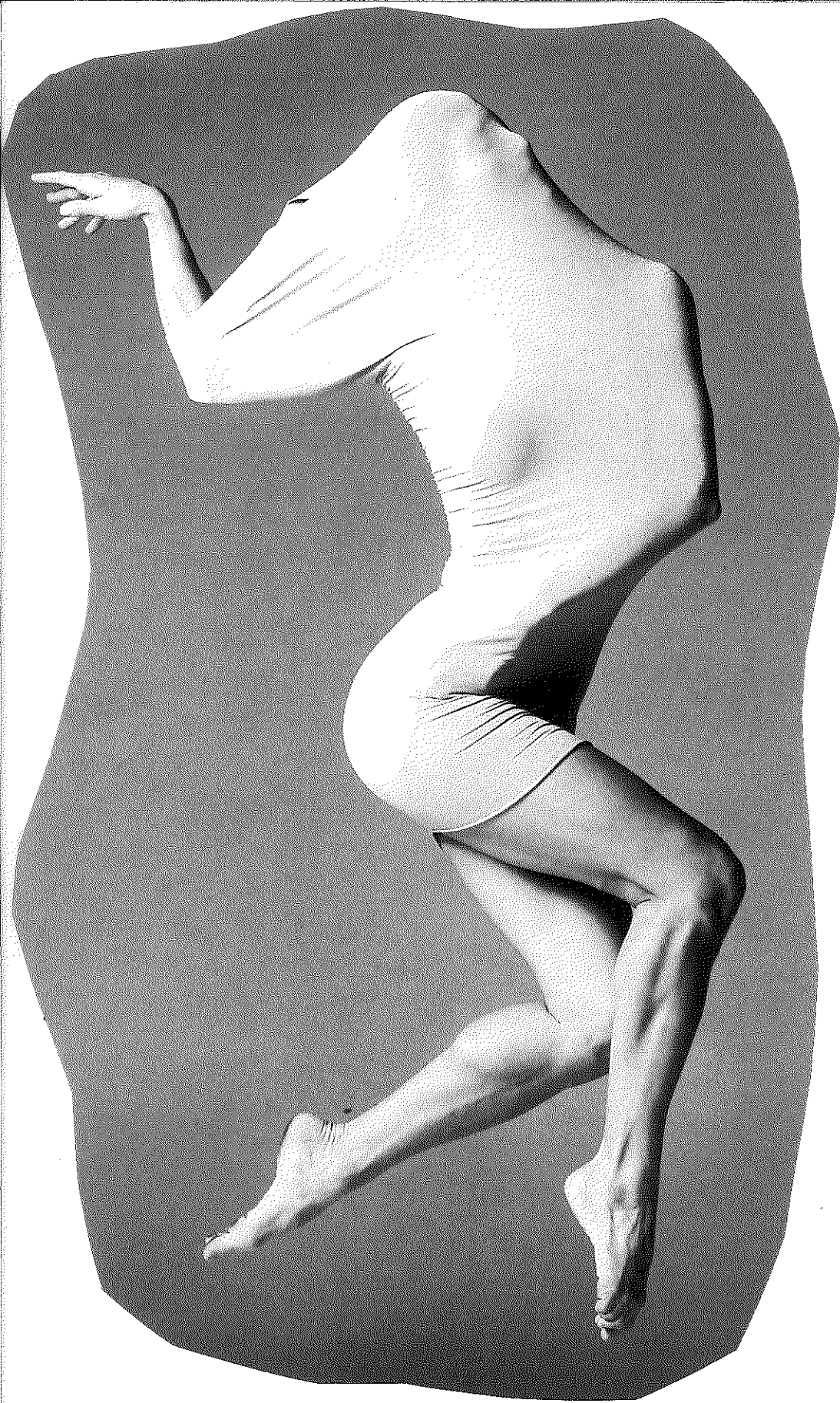
That which cannot be sung can be danced.

-Old French saying

*Jessica Harper*  
*Senior Thesis*  
*May 10, 2002*



Ashley Roland, BODYVOX



Charissa Barton and Matthew Rodarte, THE PARSONS DANCE COMPANY

**Jessica Harper**  
**Senior Thesis**  
**Summary of Courses**

**FUNDAMENTALS-Judith M. Scalin**

- Explore movement with improvisation, invention, gestures, partnering
- Developing aesthetic vocabulary
- Focusing on elements of dance
- Speaking and writing about dance (journals, composing studies)
- Analyze, reflect, understand original movement when improvising
- Awareness, attention, intention and action when being an audience member

**ORIENTATION TO DANCE-Judith M. Scalin**

- Introduction to college (what it means to be a freshman)
- Understanding multiple intelligences
- Discussion on nutrition and how to be healthy

**LABAN-Megan Reisel**

- Introduction to theories of Rudolf Laban (LMA)
- Examination of human movement (body, effort, shape and space)
- Analysis and description of non-verbal communication
- Developing choreographic and improvisation skills to evolve expression
- Written and oral observations (journals)
- Increase spatial awareness, using Laban's scientific notations

**DANCE STYLES AND FORMS-Scott Heinzerling**

- Exposition to specific choreographic issues
- Movement studies to expand development of original movement
- Having a deeper understanding of Laban's effort concepts
- Increase performance skills (developing own aesthetic)
- Discussion of choreography, relation to music, dance history
- Investigation of diversity with approaches, as well as solutions
- Having a wide range of movement (space, time, energy)
- Ability to identify physical, conceptual and theoretical characteristics
- Journal entries (challenges, discoveries, progressions)

**DANCE HISTORY-Dana Whitco**

- Developing understanding of dance and how it evolved from ancient times up until now
- Acquiring knowledge through video, lectures, handouts and movement
- Ability to create movement studies pertaining to different time periods
- Investigation of a dance artist (presentations given to diversify our knowledge)

**TO DANCE IS HUMAN-Judith M. Scalin**

- Awareness to discipline of dance
- Examination of the dynamics of dance (as a human, ritual, art, entertainment)

- Investigation of different cultures using speakers, videos, written material
- Having a connection with past, present and future (mind, body and spirit)
- Introduction to bodymind when looking at culture (familiar and unfamiliar)
- Investigation of skills and sensibilities when looking at everyday movement
- Engaging in other stories, as well as personal experiences to develop skills
- Developing knowledge of dance as a human phenomena
- Creating an understanding that there is possibility for transformation
- Having ability to speak and write about movement
- Observing, listening and respecting individual differences to others and culture
- Having connections to what may be foreign (studying aspects of oneself)
- Investigation of culture to culture and seeing where dance is revealed
- Exercising the mind, body and spirit to know oneself and developing curiosity
- Understanding multiple intelligences
- Applying the course's content to our lives

### **PRINCIPLES OF TEACHING DANCE-Judy Alter**

- Understanding specific fundamentals when teaching movement
- Having ability to give class plans, including improvisation
- Keeping journals for a 10 week class plan
- Learning new approaches, advising and solving problems when teaching
- Investigating in proper ways of stretching and strengthening of the body
- Understanding why dance and art is important for children education

### **DUNHAM DANCE TECHNIQUE-LadyHelena Walquer-Vereen**

- Gaining knowledge about Katherine Dunham and her contribution to dance
- Understanding Dunham's technique
- Having a sensibility to other cultures
- Increasing endurance and spirituality through dance
- Observing oneself when working and how one wants to be
- Improving strength, balance, rhythm skills
- Engaging in realization of healing process
- Awareness of how body can function properly without injury
- Understanding of one's limits with specific type of movement

### **MUSIC FOR DRUMMING-Monti Ellison**

- Understanding rhythm patterns, as well as songs
- Developing musicality and phrasing with specific rhythms
- Expanding knowledge, not only of other cultures, but a better sense of oneself
- Executing learning and listening skills
- Acquiring ability to keep time, hold tempo and have fun in class
- Understanding how rhythm pertains to all forms of music, relating to other classes

### **MUSIC FOR DANCE-Gary Bonner**

- Learning how to write rhythms in traditional notation
- Understanding and being able to recognize simple and compound rhythmic meters
- Retain basic musical terminology (symbols and definitions)

- Ability to create musical compositions
- Discussions of specific types of rhythms and relation to dancer/teacher
- Acquiring better listening skills and patience for creating compositions
- Applying knowledge to our own choreography

#### **KINESIOLOGY-Marie-Jose Blom-Canellias**

- Executing motivation for knowledge about structure and function of body
- Having a deeper understanding of one's instrument (body) and how to maintain it
- Acquiring knowledge of physiology, along with how each system works
- Gaining knowledge on how to function, perform at an optimal level
- Understanding how health and knowledge of the body creates better performance
- Knowledge of cell, bone, tissue, muscular system, circulatory system and nervous system
- Developing own exercises, among basic ones to maintain healthy body, avoiding injury

#### **MUSIC AND DANCE OF BALI-Nanik Wenten**

- Being exposed to basic vocabulary of Balinese dancing
- Learning the discipline of Balinese traditional dancing
- Understanding the tempo, as well as interpretations through music and dance of Bali
- Executing performance of gestures with isolation, as well as having fluidity

#### **CREATIVE DANCE FOR CHILDREN-Susan Cambigue-Tracey**

- Being familiar with physical and emotional development patterns of children
- Ability to express oneself through movement
- Acquiring methods of presenting movement to children
- Being familiar with different methods of teaching
- Understanding of why art is an important aspect of children's education
- Executing problem-solving techniques to create a safe and fun learning environment
- Ability to create plans and lessons for children (relating stories, music, videos, etc.)

#### **DANCE TOUR GROUP-Patrick Damon Rago**

- Having basic knowledge of creating lectures
- Ability to execute advanced performance skills
- Familiarity with dance productions
- Having interaction with community in personal and professional manner
- Ability to speak about elements of dance, performance and dance education

#### **FRIDAY DANCE WORKSHOP-Holly Johnston**

- Creating a strong foundation of range and articulation of the body
- Ability to cultivate an eye for movement analysis
- Acquiring a better relationship with time, rhythm, music and breath
- Having better spatial awareness
- Understanding functional alignment with diligent practice

#### **BALLET-Lisa Marie Goodman, Scott Heinzerling, Charolette Richards, Tekla Kostek**

- Better awareness of human physic and how it can function



- Ability to increase strength, flexibility, stamina
- Acquiring a better understanding of basic principles of classical ballet
- Developing a personal style with a technical foundation
- Attaining a professional attitude when understanding different rhythms and combinations
- Executing correct body alignment in correlation to breath

#### **MODERN-Scott Heinzerling, John Pennington, Holly Johnston**

- Building strong technical foundation for supporting strength, stamina and range
- Developing cardio-vascular and muscular endurance
- Understanding fundamentals of yoga, release technique, Pilates and modern techniques
- Acquiring ability to live up to a professional standard (good attitude)
- Learning to work with intention and rigor
- Ability to expand kinesphere, exploring all ranges of body (pathways and levels)
- Having a better understanding of speed, tempo, rhythm and phrasing

#### **ADVANCED COMMERCIAL JAZZ-Andre Paradis, Jason Myhre**

- Expanding knowledge of advanced jazz techniques (commercial world)
- Ability to improve with challenging phrases (understanding at fast past)
- Executing movement correctly with a good attitude
- Increase of strength, flexibility and stamina
- Gaining more confidence in performing, as well as auditioning in commercial world
- Knowledge on resume information, audition techniques, headshots

#### **TAP-Steve Zee**

- Ability to execute coordination with combinations and timing
- Having a better sense of musicality
- Exposition to different rhythms
- Having confidence when improvising and performing

#### **PILATES-Patricia Cabarallos**

- Understanding the body and how it functions starting from breath
- Ability to work from the inner core, possibly on a cellular level
- Executing specific exercises to further strength and flexibility
- Having more knowledge about specific muscles, as well as the spinal column
- Being able to articulate vocabulary when giving exercises or verbal responses
- Awareness of imbalances within body (exercises/stretchers that will benefit)

#### **DANCE CONDITIONING/ASHTANGA YOGA FOR DANCERS-Holly Johnston**

- Building strong physical practice of primary series of Ashtanga yoga
- Ability to perform postures that will tone muscles and benefit internal organs
- Understanding how the practice will rid of blockages, weaknesses in body
- Awareness of breath and having coordination with movement
- Creating concentration for balance and functional positions
- Relating knowledge to one's body, in and out of class
- Developing own ways of conditioning the body



Ashley Roland BODYVOX

Ludwig Gombits, Eliot Feld's BALLETT TECH



Jessica Harper

Senior Thesis

March, 2002

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